

Message Text

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PAGE 01 AMMAN 06141 01 OF 02 111007Z

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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5620

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 AMMAN 6141

NODIS CHEROKEE

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, JO, US, XF

SUBJ: TALK WITH KING AND RIFAI ON HAWKS AND SINAI ACCORD

REF: STATE 214850; AMMAN 6139 AND 6140

1. FOLLOWING PRESENTS ADDITIONAL POINTS AND COMMENTS RESULTING FROM MY TALKS WITH KING AND RIFAI SEPTEMBER 10 IN CONNECTION WITH REFSTATETEL.

2. RIFAI: WHILE RIFAI'S INITIAL REACTION TO THE PROPOSAL ON HAWKS WAS POSITIVE, WE HAD QUITE AN EXTENSIVE PERIOD OF GIVE AND TAKE ON ISSUE OF A MORE POTITIVE APPROACH TO THE INTERIM ACCORD. RIFAI TOLD ME THAT HE HAD RECEIVED WORK LATE LAST EVENING THAT SITUATION IN WASHINGTON SEEMED MORE POSITIVE ON HAWKS AND THAT THE DEPARTEMENT WAS MAKING AN ALL OUT EFFORT TO OVERCOME THE OBJECTIONS. HE WAS CLEARLY PREPARED FOR THE POSSIBILITY OF A FACE-SAVING EFFORT AND FROM HIS INITIAL REACTION WAS SEEMINGLY STEELED FOR SOMETHING A BIT MORE DRASTIC: HIS MAJOR CONCERN AS REPORTED PREVIOUSLY WAS THAT JORDAN NOT BE DICTATED TO ABOUT THE ACTUAL PLACE OF DEPLOYMENT BY THE UNITED STATES. THERE WAS NO INDICATION AT ALL THAT JORDAN WOULD NOT DEPLOY THE MISSILES PROVIDED FOR IN THE KING'S LETTER TO CONGRESS.

3. ON THE QUESTION OF THE INTERIM ACCORDAN THERE WAS A GENERAL REHERSAL OF THE FORMER POSITIONS. I PUT SPECIAL EMPHASIS THIS TIME ON THE POINTS MADE IN THE MESSAGE, BUT LEFT RIFAI UNDER NO DOUBT THAT
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SECRET

PAGE 02 AMMAN 06141 01 OF 02 111007Z

WE WERE VERY UNHAPPY ABOUT THE REACTION ON HIS SIDE TO MY LAST

CONVERSATION. IN ADDITION, SINCE HE RAISED AGAIN THE QUESTION OF ISRAELI STATEMENTS, I WAS ABLE TO PASS ON THE FACT THAT WE HAD ALSO MADE KNOWN OUR VIEWS TO THE ISRAELIS ABOUT HOW UNHELPFUL THESE STATEMENTS WERE COMING AT THIS TIME. I ASKED RIFAI WHAT KHADDAM HAD BEEN UP TO HERE. RIFAI SAID THAT THE PRINCIPAL SYRIAN PREOCCUPATION WAS IN GATHERING AROUND IT OTHER ARAB SUPPORT. SAAD FELT GENUINELY DESERTED BY THE EGYPTIANS AND HAD SENT KHADDAM OUT ON THE ROAD TO SEE WHAT HE COULD DO, USING THE INTERIM ACCORD AND THE EGYPTIANS AS WHIPPING BOYS TO DRUM UP SUPPORT. I TOLD RIFAI THAT IF ASAD REALLY WANTED TO MOVE AHEAD WITH NEGOTIATIONS, KNOCKING DOWN THIS AGREEMENT DID NOT SEEM TO BE A VERY WISE WAY OF IMPROVING HIS OWN CHANCES. RIFAI REPLIED THAT ASAD REALLY WANTS SOMETHING, BUT UNDERSTANDS THAT THE US MAY NOT BE ABLE TO PRODUCE WHAT HE WANTS IN AN

ACCEPTABLE TIME PERIOD AND THEREFORE CANNOT BE SEEN TO LEAPING AT THE CHANCE TO BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS. RIFAI THEN VENTURED HIS OPION THAT THE ISRAELIS ARE SO TOUGH HE WILL NOT GET ANYTHING ON THE GOLAN SO WHY FOOL AROUND WITH IT. I ASKED HIM WHAT THAT MEANT IN TERMS OF TERRITORY OR TIME. HE SAID THAT THE ISRAELIS WOULD NOT WITHDRAW ANYWHERE ON THE GOLAN UNTIL WELL AFTER OUR ELECTIONS AND THEN IT MAY BE TOO LATE, ADDING THAT BY THEN THE ARAB WORLD WILL BE IN TURMOIL

WITH EACH OF THEM AT EACH OTHERS THROATS. I ASKED RIFAI WHAT OPTIONS HE THOUGHT WE HAD IN THE MEANTIME AND WAS THERE AN ALTERNATIVE TO STARTING THE PROCESS OF NEGOTIATIONS ON THE GOLAN. HE HAD NO REAL ANSWER. LATER FIRAI SAID THAT HE DID NOT THINK THE SYRIANS WOULD LET THINGS GET OUT OF HAND IN TERMS OF PUBLIC OPPOSITION TO THE ACCORD AND HE EMPHASIZED THAT JORDAN WAS IN A BETTER POSITION TO INFLUENCE SYRIA IN A MODERATE DIRECTION WHERE IT REALLY COUNTS IF IT DID NOT GET TOO FAR AWAY FROM THE SYRIAN POSITION NOW. SIMILARLY, IF JORDAN TOOK A PUBLIC POSITION ON THE SINAI ACCORD ANS WAS SUPPORTIVE OF THE US ROLE AND EFFORTS, IT WOULD HAVE TO STATE ITS RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE EGYPTIAN ACCEPTANCE OF CERTAIN CONDITIONS OF THE SINAI AGREEMENT AND THIS WOULD ONLY PUT IT MORE AT ODDS WITH SYRIA.

4. I TALKED ABOUT THE NEED FOR SUPPORT ALSO IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EFFORT ON THE HAWKS. JORDAN'S SUPPORTERS COULD ONLY ASSUME THAT JORDAN HAD CHANGED ITS TRADITIONAL VIEW AND WAS BEING NEGATIVE ON
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 AMMAN 06141 01 OF 02 111007Z

WHAT HAD BEEN WORKED OUT BY THE US AFTER JORDAN HAD URGED US TO TAKE THIS STEP. RIFAI REPEATED AS IN OUR EARLIER CONVERSATION," SINCE WHEN HAS JORDAN'S VIEW BEEN SO IMPORTANT IN THE CONGRESS?" ADDING THAT THE MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE SITUATION WAS IMPROVING EVEN IN THE FACE OF WHAT JORDAN HAD SAID ABOUT THE AGREEMENT. I WARNED RIFAI THAT IT MIGHT BE ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEOFRE JORDAN'S VIEWS WOULD BECOME THE OBJECT OF ATTENTION IN THE ISRAELI LOBBY AND THAT EACH VOTE WAS

IMPORTANT AS THE SECRETARY'S MESSAGE HAD POINTED OUT.

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PAGE 01 AMMAN 06141 02 OF 02 111102Z

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 AMMAN 6141

NODIS CHEROKEE

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

5. WE REVIEWED ALSO JORDANAIN THOUGHTS ABOUT THE PLO AND SYRIA. ON SYRIA, RIFAI SAID HE IS CONVINCED THAT ASAD DOES NOT WANT WAR AND CANNOT POSSIBLY TAKE ON A CONFLICT WITH A LARGE PART OF HIS ARMY ON THE IRAQI BORDER. THE PLO IS DWINDLING IN STAUTRE AND EFFECTIVENESS. THEY HAVE STAYED OUT OF THE CONTINUING CONTROVERSY IN LEBANON AT SOME COST TO THEMSELVES. THEY ARE SEEN AS THE ONLY EFFECTIVE MUSLIM FIGHTING FORCE AND IF THE LEGANESE THROW THE ARMY INTO THE TRIPOLI AFFAIR, THE PALESTINIANS WILL HAVE TO GO IN TO HELP THE MUSLIMS. THAT MIGHT THEN DRAG IN THE SYRIAN WHO THUS FAR ALSO HAVE STAYED OUT. RIFAI THEN CONCLUDED THAT THE WHOLE MESS WAS COOKED YP BY FRANGIE BECAUSE HE DOES NOT WANT TO BOW OUT. KARAMI'S SUPPORT COMES FROM ONE VILLGAE AND FRANGIE'S FROM THE OTHER AND THE TWO ARE FIGHTING IT OUR OVER PURELY POLITICAL ISSUES HAVING TO DO WITH WHO WILL RUN LEBANON.

6 AT HOME RIFAI SAID THAT THEY HAD WARNED THE NEWSPAPERS TO TONE DOWN PUBLIC ON THE AGREEMENT ANT THAT HE HAD HAD TO ARREST DEMONSTRATORS MARCHING ON THE EGYPTIAN EMBASSY. I POINTED OUT THE FLOOD OF ORGANIZATIONS RUSHING TO COMMENT ON THE AGREEMENT AND RIFAI REPLIED THEY ARE UNKNOWNNS WHO REPRESENT NO ONE AND EVERYBODY UNDERSTANDS THIS.

RIFAI SAID THAT HE HAD CENSORED SADAT'S ATTACK ON SYRIA AND SIMILARLY ASAD'S ATTACKS ON EGYPT ON TELEVISION.

7. SUBSEQUENTLY WE SAY THE KING. HIS FAVORABLE REACTION TO THE PROPOSAL ON THE HAWKS HAS ALREADY BEEN REPORTED. HE NOTED THAT

ANYTHING HAVING TO DO WITH A POSITIVE STATEMENT ON THE SINAI ACCORD

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 AMMAN 06141 02 OF 02 111102Z

WOULD BE DIFFICULT. HE WANTED TO KEEP HIS LINES OPEN TO SYRIA. HE REALLY GHTOUGHT THAT HE COULD HAVE A CONTINUING POSITIVE AND MODERATE INFLUENCE ON THE SYRIANS, BUT HE COULD NOT DESTROY THAT POSSIBILITY NOW WITH A STRONG STATEMENT ON THE AGREEMENT. THE ONLY STATEMENT HE COULD SEE HIS WAY CLEAR TO GIVING WOULD HAVE TO BALANCE STRONG SUPPORT FOR THE US ROLE AND THE PROCESS WITH RESERVATIONS ABOUT WHAT THE EGYPTIANS HAD AGREED TO. THIS WOULD NOT HELP HIM EITHER WI THE EGYPTIANS WITH WHOM HE WANTED TO MAINTAIN CONTACT. I TOLD THE KING THAT I HAD ALWAYS BEEN A FRIEND AND THAT I WANTED TO TELL HIM IN THE SPIRIT OF THAT FRIENDSHIP THAT THE STATEMENTS MADE BY JORDAN (IN RESPONSE TO WHATEVER NEWS STORY WAS NOT RELEVANT),

HAD LEFT MANY OF HIS FRIENDS WONDERING SINCE JORDAN WAS NOW SEEN TO BE NEGATIVE ON ALL OF THESE POINTS -- THE US ROLE, THE STEP-BY-STEP STRATEGY, OF THE WORK THAT HE HAD PUT IN OVER THE YEARS WAS NOW BEING TURNED AROUND AND HE OWED IT TO HIMSELF TO SEE WHAT COULD BE DONE. WASN'T THERE SOMETHING POSITIVE THAT COULD BE SAID BY JORDAN TO BALANCE THE PRESENT RECORD WITHOUT DESTROYING THEIR RELATIONS WITH OTHER ARABS. RIFAI JUMPED IN HERE SEVERAL TIMES WITH NEGATIVE COMMENTS.

AFTER KEEPING AT THIS THEME, AND SECONDARILY THE ONE THAT IT WOULD NOT DO HIM OR US ANY GOOD ON THE HAWKS IN OUR ALL OUT EFFORT TO HAVE THIS POSITION STAND, HE SAID THAT "WHAT WORRIES ME IS THAT WE MIGHT THROW AWAY ALL OF THAT PAST HARD WORK". I ENCOURAGED HIM FURTHER AND WE LOOKED AT ALTERNATIVES. UNFORTUNATELY, THE MANEUVERING ROOM IS VERY SMALL. RIFAI HAD EARLIER SUGGESTED TO ME THAT HE WOULD NOT BACK OFF THE POSITIVE THINGS HE HAD SAID WHEN THE SECRETARY ARRIVED, AND I ASKED IF IN FACT THEY WERE REALLY POSITIVE, WOULD HE REPEAT THEM HE HEDGED, BUT LATER AGREED UNDER PUSHING THAT IF THAT WAS SOMETHING WHICH WOULD HELP HE WAS PERSUADABLE. WE ALSO TALKED ABOUT WHAT POSITIVE THINGS COULD BE SAID AND CAME UP WITH A LIST (LATER REVEIWD AND RATIFIED BY RIFAI), WHICH HAS BEEN EARLIER REPORTED. (AMMAN 6140) IN EACH CASE HOWEVER, RIFAI INSISTED AND THE KING AGREED (HE REALLY DOES FEEL STRONGLY ON THIS POINT) THAT THERE WOULD HAVE TO BE SOME BALANCE STRUCK BY STATING THEIR GENUINE RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE TERMS EGYPT ACCEPTED -- I.E. THE SUBSTANCE AND CONTENT". BUT THEY DID SAY WITHOUT HESITATION THAT IF WE WANTED TO TELL ANYONE -- CONGRESSIONAL QUESTIONERS OR OTHERWISE-- WHAT THE JORDANIAND POSITION WAS, THEY HAD NO HESITATION IN OUR USING THE ABOVE "BALANCED" FORMULATION. SIMILARLY, THEY WITH

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 AMMAN 06141 02 OF 02 111102Z

RELUCTANCE WOULD AGREE TO DO SOMETHING PUBLICLY ALONG THE LINES OF THE THAT FORMULATION IF WE WANTED THEM TO. I SAID THAT I WAS NOT SURE HOW THIS POSITION WOULD BE GREETED IN WASHINGTON, BUT THAT IT WAS AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE ABSOLUTELY NEGATIVE REACTION I HAD RECEIVED EARLIER. IN CLOSING I ASKED THEM ALSO TO TRY TO REMAIN FLEXIBLE AND KEEP THEIR OPTIONS OPEN IN THE EVENT THERE WAS SOMETHING ELSE WE THOUGHT THEY COULD DO. KING INDICATED HE WOULD, BUT (WITH SOME REGRET), THAT HIS ELBOW ROOM IS VERY LIMITED.

8. RIFAI MADE A PARTING PITCH FOR SAYING NOTHING IN AMMAN PUBLICLY. THE KING NOTED THAT HE WANTED TO WORK WITH ASAD PRIVATELY ON SOLVING THE LEBANESE PROBLEM. HE COULD BE A POSITIVE INFLUENCE ON ASAD WHEN THE TIME CAME IN THE GOLAN NEGOTIATIONS. THEY WOULD SEE WHAT THEY COULD DO WITH KHADDAM WHEN HE COMES ON SATURDAY ABOUT KEEPING THE SYRIANS QUIET, BUT ALL THIS WOULD REQUIRE THAT THEY NOT GET TOO FAR AWAY FROM THE SYRIANS. AND ARGUES THAT WE SHOULD CONSIDER NOW WHETHER STAKES (IN OUR TERMS) ARE REALLY WORTH THEIR MAKING A POSITIVE STATEMENT AT THE EXPENSE OF THIS LONG TERM FUTURE POSSIBILITY. RIFAI WAS QUICK TO ADD, WITH AN EXPRESSION THAT IT WAS ALL VERY HUSH HUSH, THAT KING WOULD MAKE A REAL TRY TO BRING SADAT AND ASAD TOGETHER STARTING WITH HIS EGYPTIAN VISIT SCHEDULED FOR AFTER IDU AL FITR. KING SUPPORTED THAT POINT, BUT IT WAS POSSIBLE, GIVEN HIS REACTION, THAT HE WAS HEARING IT FOR THE FIRST TIME.

9. COMMENT: ON THE HAWKS, THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT THE JORDANIANS ARE MOST PLEASED BY THE PRESENT OUTLOOK AND YOUR UPBEAT MESSAGE. THEY ARE ALSO HAPPY THAT COMPROMISE (AT THIS POINT AT LEAST) REQUIRES SO LITTLE SUBSTANTIVE GIVE ON THEIR PART. AS PREDICTED EARLIER, THEIR FLEXIBILITY ON A POSITIVE STATEMENT IS STILL LIMITED. I DO NOT BELIEVE THERE IS TOO MUCH FURTHER GIVE, ALTHOUGH THE KING IS WORRIED AS NOTED EARLIER BY THE POSSIBLE DAMAGE TO HIS IMAGE IN THE US AND THE WESTERN WORLD. THIS IS THE FIRST TEST OF THE NEWFOUND JORDANIAN RELATIONSHIP WITH SYRIA IN COMPETITION WITH ITS OLDER, MORE ESTABLISHED RELATIONSHIP WITH THE US. AT THIS POINT THE TILT IS CLEARLY TOWARD SYRIA AND GETTING ALONG IN THE ARAB WORLD. THIS TILT IS BASED ON THEIR PRAGMATIC VIEW THAT BEING MORE POSITIVE FOR US MEANS GREATER DAMAGE TO THEIR ARAB WORLD POSITION, THAN STANDING PAT SEEMS TO IMPLY FOR THEIR POSITION WITH US AND ELSEWHERE WE ARE DOING A MORE CAREFUL ASSESSMENT OF SYRIAN

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 AMMAN 06141 02 OF 02 111102Z

JORDANIAN RELATIONS AND WHAT THEY MIGHT MEAN FOR US OVER THE LONGER TERM WHICH WE EXPECT TO SUMMARIZE SHORTLY IN A CABLE AND REPORT IN FULL BY AIRGRAM.

10. WHILE POSITION TAKEN BY JORDANIANS IN LAST PARAGRAPH AMMAN 6140 WAS CLOSE TO THAT SIGNALLED EARLIER IN AMMAN 6067, THE LATTER WAS BASED ON WHAT RIFAI HAD TOLD ME PREVIOUSLY.

IN ABSENCE OF ANY SUBSEQUENT COMMENT BY THE DEPARTMENT ON THAT POSITION, I GAVE NEITHER KING NOR RIFAI ANY INDICATION THAT SUCH AN APPROACH WOULD BE EVEN MINIMALLY SATISFACTORY AS A "POSITIVE" STATEMENT.

1.. KING'S MOOD IS DECIDEDLY MORE RELAXED AND OPTIMISTIC THAN WHEN SECRETARY WAS HERE. MAIN CHANGE HAS COME THROUGH THE BETTER OUTLOOK ON HAWK. THE PERSONAL ANGUISH AND TENSION WHICH HE HAS BUILT UP OVER THE QUESTION HAS COLORED HIS OUTLOOK ON LIFE OVER THE LAST MONTH AND ONE HALF, PERHAPS MORE THAN ANY OF US REALIZED. IN ADDITION, HE IS VACATIONING AT AQABA WHERE I MET HIM UNSHAVEN AND IN A SWIM SUIT, AND AQABA SEEMS TO BE VALUABLE TONIC FOR HIM UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES. END COMMENT. PICKERING

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